

Ann Dennison

Testimony before the House Energy and Commerce Committee

Health Subcommittee

March 1, 2006

Chairman Deal and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you and talk about the new Medicare Prescription Drug benefit and what it has done for me. My name is Ann Dennison. I'm the daughter of a pharmacist. I am 72 years old and live in the North Georgia Mountains in a little town called Hiawassee. I have lived there for 28 years. I love it there. Our community is very tightly knit; it reminds me of the way communities were in the 40's during the War. Everyone looks out for each other. The air and water are clean and the people are friendly. Hiawassee is having its sesquicentennial celebration this March and you are all invited to come down.

I've raised one son in Hiawasse, the other two were raised elsewhere. My son Lewy is here with me today. Over the years I have had a few different jobs. I've worked as a cashier, a bartender and owned my own restaurant, Ann's Place. I've also had quite a few health problems. I have congenital heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, allergies & bronchial pneumonia. I've also had two thyroid surgeries, one back surgery, had cancer removed from my tongue, two shunts put in and one of the biggest peptic ulcers the doctor in South Carolina had ever seen! So as you can imagine, I take quite a few drugs. I take Amaryl and Glucophage to control my sugar, a water pill called Hydrochlorothiazide, Synthroid and Amitriptyline for my thyroid, Digitek, Lipitor and Isosorbide for my heart, Coumadin and Acupril for my blood pressure, Allegra for my allergies, Actonel for the osteoporosis and I carry Nitroquick with me in case of a heart attack.

With the help of my pharmacist, I chose a plan in November. I had no problems enrolling. I chose the AARP plan because it allows me to continue going to Rite-Aid where I had been going. Also, I'm active in the AARP and have used their discount card in the past.

Before the Part D benefit became a reality, I was paying out of pocket for my drugs. When I was paying for all of them it was costing me over \$700 a month. However, for a while I was getting eight of them for free through the nurse practitioner at my doctor's office in Hiawasse. That brought the cost per month down to around \$300 some months. My Social Security check is only \$560 a month so if you do the math you can see what buying the drugs I needed to stay healthy did to me financially. I would surrender my entire check to the pharmacy and the shortfall I would put on a credit card. When my sons found out about this they began sharing the cost of my drugs.

I've been to the pharmacy over a half a dozen times since my Part D coverage went into effect. Not once has the total for my drugs cost me over \$10. I pay between one and five dollars per prescription. Obviously, this benefit has been a tremendous blessing for me. I no longer have to rely on my sons for help, I've paid off the credit card debt I ran up and now I'm thinking about trying to enjoy life a little with the money I've saved.

I appreciate the opportunity to come and tell you about my experience with Part D and thank you for passing this bill that has made such a difference in my health and my life.